

Newsmen, not spies

In 1976, the Central Intelligence Agency announced in unequivocal language:

"The CIA will not enter into any paid or contractual relationship with any full-time or part-time news correspondent accredited by any United States news service, newspaper, periodical, radio or television network or station."

At least we fail to see the ambiguity in this policy statement. Adm. Stansfield Turner, the CIA director, and, apparently, President Jimmy Carter are hedging their bets, however.

* * *

Now, Turner says he sees nothing wrong with using reporters for intelligence operations. He said last week the CIA policy has been changed to permit journalists to work for the agency with the approval of the director.

Three times, he said, he has ap-

proved plans to use American reporters overseas for secret intelligence missions. He said none of the missions materialized, however.

The fact that a newsman is in the right place at the right time does not qualify him as a foreign agent.

In fact, a reporter who accepts an assignment from the CIA jeopardizes his effectiveness — and the effectiveness of all others in similar circumstances — by breaking the bonds of integrity.

He becomes suspect, and all his brother journalists become suspect. He undermines his credibility, forfeits his relationship with news sources and compromises his own employer.

It is not the patriotic obligation of a newsman or woman stationed in a foreign country to use his or her background knowledge and professional connections in the service of the CIA.

* * *

Turner and Carter, in fact, already have cast suspicion on all U.S. journalists serving in foreign countries with their admission that, yes, they would approve such spy activities.

They also jeopardize the integrity of all journalists when they approve the use of spies posing as newsmen while on CIA assignment.

The combination does not work. The president, Turner and the CIA should revert to the 1976 policy and recruit their agents elsewhere. And tell the world, even if few, now, will believe them.